

# *Instructions for F-1 Optional Practical Training*

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In the following cases, you may apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**. OPT is employment authorization that permits you to take a job that is both directly related to your field of study and commensurate with your educational level.

1. During your annual vacation period or when school is not in session\*
2. During the fall or spring semesters, for a maximum cumulative employment total of 20 hours per week
3. After completion of graduate course work, but prior to deposit of thesis or dissertation\*
4. After completion of your program of study. Your application must be submitted to the USCIS before you finish your program of study.

\*You must be registered, or intend to register, in the same program after your OPT.

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**Step One** - Make an appointment with a designated school official in the **Office of International Programs**. Bring the following documents with you to your appointment:

1. Completed Form I-765. This form is available for download from the USCIS website at:

<http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/New%20Structure/2nd%20Level%20%28Left%20Nav%20Parents%29/Forms%20-%202nd%20Level/Forms%20Static%20Files/I-765.pdf>\*

\*Please look at the instructions for the I-765 form on the USCIS website:

<http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/New%20Structure/2nd%20Level%20%28Left%20Nav%20Parents%29/Forms%20-%202nd%20Level/Forms%20Static%20Files/I-765instr.pdf>

2. Your most recent original I-20. If changes need to be made to your I-20, you should also complete an Application for I-20.
3. Passport with I-94 card attached
4. Two photographs
5. Departmental Certification of completion of work/studies
6. If you received curricular practical training authorization, bring proof of your enrollment fulfilling curricular practical training requirements. Acceptable documents include transcript, enrollment history print out from PAWS, or grade report.

If your documents are OK, the designated school official will enter a recommendation for the OPT into SEVIS, and create a new I-20 for you. You will be able to pick up your new I-20 in one or two working days.

**Note:** for post-completion practical training, we will recommend that your practical training begin the day after completion of studies. Completion of studies can be either 1) the day after the end date of your final semester of registration; 2) the date on which you deposit your thesis; or 3) the day after your graduate assistantship appointment ends. In the case of OPT after completion of studies, you will not be able to work after the recommended starting date of your OPT. This includes hourly and graduate assistant work done on the EIU campus. If you have a graduate assistantship, you may lose your tuition waiver. See "Notes" section for more information on OPT start dates and tuition waivers.

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**Step Two** - Mail your application for practical training to the Nebraska Service Center. Be sure to keep photocopies of all documents sent to the USCIS for your records. Paperclip the documents listed below in the order that they appear, and send them to the USCIS by *certified mail with a return receipt requested, registered mail, or express/overnight mail:*

1. Personal check, cashier's check, or money order in the amount of \$340.00, payable to "Department of Homeland Security"
2. Two photographs. (see detailed information below). Please place your photos in a clear Ziploc baggie.
3. Form I-765
4. Photocopy of SEVIS I-20 with the notation recommending OPT, and photocopies of any prior I-20(s) or other immigration documents showing another nonimmigrant status
5. Photocopy of I-94(s), front and back
6. Photocopy of identity page and US entry visa page from your passport, including passport expiration date
7. Photocopy of your last **E**mployment **A**uthorization **D**ocument (EAD) and I-797 Notice of Action (if applicable)

**For Certified or Registered Mail send to:**

Department of Homeland Security  
Citizenship and Immigration Services Nebraska  
Service Center  
P.O. Box 87765  
Lincoln, NE 68501-7765

**For Express or Overnight Mail send to:**

USCIS  
Nebraska Service Center  
850 S Street  
P.O. Box 87765 Lincoln,  
NE 68501-7765

**More Information About the OPT Application:**

- You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT. You must have the intention of looking for a job related to your field of study during the OPT period.
- University rules require graduate assistants to be appointed for 91 days during the semester in order to receive a tuition waiver. **If you apply for OPT after completion of studies with a date that falls before the 91st day of your assistantship appointment, you will be required to pay tuition and fees for that semester.** You may not begin employment for OPT until you receive your EAD.
- If your OPT employment is with Eastern Illinois University, bring your EAD to your hiring department before your employment begins. A departmental official must complete a Form I-9 on your behalf. Your appointment cannot be processed until you complete the I-9.
- You should not travel outside of the U.S. after completing your studies if you have not yet received your EAD. If you travel, you abandon your OPT application, and it may not be possible for you to reenter the U.S.
- Please contact a designated school official if you wish to travel internationally after receiving your EAD, regardless of your location in the U.S. Your I-20 must be endorsed for travel. Travel endorsements are valid for six months only while you are engaged in OPT. In some cases, a new I-20 must be prepared for travel.

**More Information About the Photos:**

Effective September 1, 2004, USCIS will accept only full-frontal color photos (passport style photos). The photos must have a white background taken no earlier than 30 days. Both photos must be identical. Your head should be bare unless you are wearing a headdress as required by a religious order to which you belong. Lightly print your name and your I-94 number or "A" number on the back of each photo with a pencil or black pen.